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Social criticism in three contemporary dystopian novels

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract</p> <p>Tutkin pro gradu -tutkielmassani kolmea dystopiateosta, jotka ovat <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (suomeksi <i>Orjattareni</i>, kirjoittanut Margaret Atwood), <i>The Hunger Games</i> (suomeksi <i>Nälkäpeli</i>, kirjoittanut Suzanne Collins) ja <i>Divergent</i> (suomeksi <i>Outolintu</i>, kirjoittanut Veronica Roth). Tutkin, millaisia eri yhtymäkohtia ja eroavaisuuksia moderneilla dystopiakirjoilla on. Tutkimukseni kohteena ovat eri yhteiskunnalliset rakenteet, päähenkilökertoja, yhteiskuntaluokat ja valtion tapa käyttää ja osoittaa valtaa.</p> <p>Teoksien <i>Orjattareni</i> ja <i>Nälkäpelin</i> yhteiskuntarakenteet ovat autoritaarisia, kun taas <i>Outolinnussa</i> yhteiskuntarakennetta kuvaillaan demokratiaksi, vaikkakin se osoittautuu myöhemmin lähes diktatuuriksi. Jokaisessa teoksessa kertoja puhuu ensimmäisessä persoonassa. <i>Nälkäpeli</i> ja <i>Outolintu</i> ovat nuortenkirjoja. Teokset alkavat samantyyllisesti, ja niissä on myös samankaltainen juonirakenne.</p> <p>Kaikki kolme teosta kertovat tarinan altavastaaajasta, joka on julman yhteiskuntajärjestelmän ja vapaudenriiston uhri. Teoksissa <i>Orjattareni</i> ja <i>Nälkäpeli</i> päähenkilöt kuuluvat alimpiin yhteiskuntaluokkiin, mutta <i>Nälkäpelissä</i> päähenkilöllä on mahdollisuus kohota yhteiskunnassa. Teoksessa <i>Orjattareni</i> päähenkilöllä taas ei ole mitään mahdollisuutta parantaa yhteiskunnallista asemaansa. Yhteiskuntaluokkien eriarvoisuus ei tule yhtä räikeästi esille <i>Outolinnussa</i>, jonka päähenkilö voikin vaikuttaa yhteiskuntaluokkaansa paljon enemmän kuin kahdessa muussa kirjassa. Valtaa harjoitetaan propagandan, sanavapauden rajoittamisen ja väkivallan keinoin. Väkivalta ei ole missään kolmesta kirjasta täysin kiellettyä, sillä valtaapitävät voivat harjoittaa väkivaltaa sorrettuja kohtaan.</p> <p><i>Orjattareni</i> ja <i>Nälkäpeli</i> mainitsevat luonnonkatastrofit yhtenä syynä kirjoissa kuvattujen Yhdysvaltojen tuhoutumiseen ja uusien dystopiavaltioiden sekä eriarvoisuuden ja hirmuhallitsijoiden nousuun. <i>Orjattaressani</i> luonnonkatastrofit ovat vaikuttaneet hedelmällisyyteen negatiivisesti, minkä myötä äärikristityt pääsevät valtaan. <i>Outolinnussa</i> syy dystopiavaltion syntyyn on ihmismielen taipumus pahuuteen, joka johtaa sotien syttymiseen. Sodat mainitaan osasyynä myös <i>Nälkäpelin</i> dystopiavaltion syntyyn. Jokaisessa teoksessa valtaapitävä eliitti pelkää vallankumousta ja valtansa menettämistä.</p> <p>Kaikissa kolmessa teoksessa päähenkilö on sorretussa asemassa ja hän kokee voimakasta uhkaa yhteiskunnan taholta. Yhteiskunta ei tue heikommassa asemassa olevia jäseniään. Päähenkilöt ovat menettäneet myös ihmisoikeuksiaan joko osittain tai kokonaan. Yhteiskunnat ovat eriytyneitä ja epätasa-arvoisia sekä yhteiskunnissa kaikkien sen jäsenten elämä ei ole yhtä arvokasta.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood was published in 1985 and it has gained new fan base and relevance in recent years when a television series based on the novel started in 2017. The novel's sequel called *The Testaments* was published in September 2019, thirty-four years after the first novel was published. *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins (2008–2010) has been very popular ever since the first novel was published in 2008. *The Hunger Games* is a dystopian novel and through it many other dystopian novels have established the genre's role among its target audience. One of these novels is *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, which was published a few years after *The Hunger Games* in 2011.

This thesis will focus on these three different dystopian novels and the research question is “What kind of different targets do modern dystopian novels have?” The aspects of research in this thesis are different social structures, the protagonist narrator, social class and the power of the state.

Erika Gottlieb (2001: 1) defines utopia as something that focuses on determined faith in justice whereas dystopian fiction shows us a society where the ruling elite subvert justice. According to Sharon Wilson (2013: 1), dystopia is utopia's opposite, which means it is a nightmare, the ultimate flawed world or a society that is worse than the existing one.

According to Keith M. Booker (2013: 1-2), the dystopian turn in American literature in the early twenty-first century is a response to real events in recent history such as the poor economic situation in the United States. He continues to mention that also the situation at the end of nineteenth century affects this dystopian wave because during that time the Western Europe experienced a deeper economic depression. Keith M. Booker (2013: 2) argues that when the new century was starting, a theory of degeneration was becoming more popular. This theory entails that human race is regressing towards savagery.

This thesis will only focus on the three modern dystopian novels two of which were written in the twenty-first century. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley was published in 1932 and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell was published in 1949. These two classics were written during the world wars: *Brave New World* was published after the First World War and before the Second World War and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* after the Second World War. It is evident that the Western world looked grim, much like a dystopia, to the people of that time. It is fascinating to think that the world where we live in today inspires authors to write dystopian stories that have gained such popularity among the readers.

The Handmaid's Tale tells a dystopian story through the narrator who is called Offred. Offred lives in Gilead, a country that is based on former United States of America. Before Gilead there were some toxic natural disasters as air became too full of chemicals, rays, radiation and the water swarmed with toxic molecules. This resulted in infertility and the birthrate started to decrease. Offred is a handmaid and thus Gilead is a grim place for her as handmaids have lost all their previous rights, such as the right to work and the right to make decisions about their own body. Some women, for example Serena, who is the wife of the commander Fred, belong to the upper class in Gilead. They have more rights compared to the handmaids, but just as the handmaids they are not allowed to work. The handmaids' only purpose in life is to have children. Each handmaid is issued to a different household and the head of the household is its commander. Offred's real name is not revealed in the book. The commander of her household is called Fred and thus her name comes from words "of" and "Fred". The novel tells Offred's story, her former life, how things started to change and how eventually the world turned into a horrible dystopia. As readers, we experience how Offred tries to keep any part of her old self she possibly can and eventually we see how she loses her identity. Offred comes across as a woman who knows what is right and tries to stay sane and hold onto to who she used to be. However, in the final two chapters Gilead finally gets to her and breaks her: "I resign my body freely, to the use of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject.

I feel for the first time, their true power” (*HT*, 298). The novel has an open ending and readers do not get know what actually happens to Offred.

In the center of *The Hunger Games* is a country called Panem that has twelve districts and a capital that is called the Capitol. North America came to an end because of war, disasters, droughts, storms, fires and encroaching seas that swallowed up much of the land. Panem is based on the wrecks of former North America and each year there is a reality television game in Panem called the Hunger Games. One boy and one girl from each district apart from the Capitol are picked usually against their will to become tributes in the Hunger Games where the children are forced to kill each other until only one is alive. The protagonist is Katniss Everdeen who volunteers to go to the 74th Annual Hunger Games instead of her little sister Prim. A boy named Peeta is also picked to go to the Games with her. Katniss and Peeta get a mentor who is a former winner in their district. This mentor is called Haymitch and even though he won the Hunger Games a long time ago, readers can still see what this brutal game did to him. He has become an unfriendly alcoholic who drinks to forget his awful youth. Many of the districts are very poor, including District 12 where Katniss, Peeta and Haymitch come from, but there are still a few districts that are wealthier, for example the Capitol is the richest part of Panem. When Katniss and Peeta are the last two alive in the Games, they decide to trick the Capitol so that it seems that they would have both eaten poisonous berries in the Games. This means the Hunger Games would not have a winner and people who are watching might see how Katniss and Peeta challenge the Capitol’s authority. This way both Katniss and Peeta are able to survive and both of them are declared as winners of the Hunger Games.

Divergent is based on a dystopian version of Chicago and the protagonist is called Tris, short for Beatrice. Just like Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, Tris is also sixteen years old. Chicago is now divided into different factions: Dauntless values bravery and the people in this faction also guard the city where Tris lives; Candor values honesty; Erudite values knowledge and logic; Abnegation values selflessness; and Amity values peace and harmony. Finally, there are people who

are called factionless, because they have failed to complete the initiation into the faction they chose. Like all sixteen-year-olds, Tris takes an aptitude test that is supposed to tell which faction is the most suitable for her. It turns out she is a Divergent, which means she is suited for multiple factions, but she has to keep this as a secret. Tris chooses Dauntless in the Choosing Ceremony, which means she is going to leave her faction Abnegation and become a faction transfer. Her brother Caleb also decided to leave their home faction Abnegation and he chooses Erudite. In her new faction, Tris must go through an initiation that consists of a ranking process. Those who fail this initiation become factionless. Tris gets to know one of the instructors of the transfer initiates in Dauntless called Four. Four is a Divergent just like Tris. At the beginning of the novel before the Choosing Ceremony, Tris has dinner with her family and it becomes clear that Abnegation and Erudite do not get along. The Erudite leader Jeanine has published reports attacking Marcus' character. Marcus is the leader of Abnegation and it later turns out he is the father of Four and that Four's former name is Tobias. The reports claim that Marcus used to be violent and cruel towards his son, Four. After Tris has chosen Dauntless as her new faction, Four reveals to her that it is true that his father Marcus used to be violent towards him. Tris and Four learn about Erudite's plans to use Dauntless to stage an attack on Abnegation. All the Dauntless members are injected with a serum that is supposed to help if somebody goes missing. In the initiation ceremony Tris realises that the serum is in fact going to be used to make Dauntless invade Abnegation. All the Dauntless members turn into soldiers when they are under the serum's influence, but the serum does not work on those who are Divergent, which means it will not affect Tris and Four. Jeanine, the Erudite leader, is behind the attack. Tris' mother, who is also a Divergent, dies during the chaos. At this point, Four is injected with a new serum and he tries to kill Tris. He manages to fight the serum eventually, so that he and Tris are able to end the simulation and free all the Dauntless members from the serum's mind control.

2 SOCIAL STRUCTURES

All the main characters in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are women who have little or no say in how things are handled in the society where they live. Somebody else is making decisions for them and they do not get any possibilities to take part in the decision making. This chapter deals with how different social structures and systems of government are portrayed in *Divergent*, *The Hunger Games* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

2.1. Dictatorship

Robert Barros (2002: 11) quotes Franz Neumann (1957: 233), who defines dictatorship as the rule of a person or a group that arrogate power to themselves and monopolize and exercise it without restraint. Barros (2002: 11) describes dictatorship as something where an individual, a clique, or small group of people use unrestricted domination of the state. Barros (2002: 11) also discusses dictatorship during the Second World War in Nazi Germany. He mentions the prerogative state, which is a governmental system that is able to use violence that no legal guarantees check or monitor.

Commanders in *The Handmaid's Tale* are the head of the house and thus the head of Offred's household is Fred. The novel does not mention who is the ruler, president or king of Gilead as all the information we get is through Offred and she as a handmaid does not have knowledge of these things.

President Snow holds the power in *The Hunger Games* while majority of the young population of Panem live in fear of being picked to go to the Games against their will (*HG*, 22, 87). The situation in Panem is described as follows:

A small elite hold the power in Panem: Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and

there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. (*HG*, 22)

According to Jennifer Gandhi (2008: 1-2), for example juntas, politburos or family councils can hold the decision-making power. Dictators can also rule with nominally democratic institutions like legislatures and political parties. There can be candidates who use party labels or they may be forced to run as independents in elections. Nowadays dictatorships are often associated with the absence of institutions and constraints.

Divergent is the only novel of the three that reveals how the leaders are chosen. The council makes decision in *Divergent* and any clear institutions or constraints are not mentioned. The council consists of fifty people who all come from Abnegation because Abnegation is regarded as incorruptible (*D*, 33). These fifty people are selected by their peers for their impeccable character, moral fortitude and leadership skills (*D*, 33). Representatives from other factions can speak in the meetings on the behalf of a particular issue, but the fifty people make the decisions. This council is to make decisions together, but Marcus is especially influential (*D*, 33). This is not democratic, however, as people do not vote, as in reality friends select their friends and people from other factions do not get to become members of the council. The council that consists of friends could be seen to be similar to a family council. A person has to be friends with those who belong to the council. If a council member decides you are not suitable for the council, you lose your chances.

2.2. Democracy

Helena Catt (2002: 5) argues that democracy means a set of rights or a way of organizing the political and economic life of state. According to Catt (2002: 4), democratic groups want to make decisions that affect all the members of the group together and they also want to make these decisions so that everybody included can participate in the decision making. According to Shauna Reilly (2010: 4), the basic principle of democracy is that citizens take part in decision-

making, which means that citizens are knowledgeable about government and capable of making choices that are informed.

The regimes of Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale* and Panem in *The Hunger Games* are clearly not democracies. Offred and other handmaids cannot take part in any decision making. Offred's only purpose in life is to have children and she is forced to take part in ceremonies in which she does not have any other choice than to have sex with the commander of her household (*HT*, 105-106). Offred is treated as if she is a creature without any feelings or thoughts. President Snow with the people of Capitol holds the power in *The Hunger Games* and the Capitol rules using fear. People in the districts, such as Katniss and her family, do not have any say in how things are handled. The people of Capitol are the only ones who do not need to take part in the Games (*HG*, 22, 44, 433).

All the sixteen-year-olds have to decide which faction they want to join in *Divergent*. Tris and her brother Caleb have to make this decision in a Choosing Ceremony where they will decide to stay in Abnegation where they have lived all their lives, or then choose another faction and leave their previous lives behind them. Marcus, the Abnegation leader, states that the Choosing Ceremony day is a day where they honour the democratic philosophy of the ancestors because everybody has the right to choose their own way in the world (*D*, 421-42). Those who decide to leave the faction where they have lived all their lives will become faction transfers. Their families might abandon them and their old faction despise them. In *Divergent*, a person is supposed to show only one character of their personality and for example for Abnegation that is selflessness. Tris remembers how in her Faction History textbook there is a motto "Faction before blood", which means the faction should be more important than your own family (*D*, 43). This motto is vaguely reminiscent of some religious cults, where after you choose to join the religion you will not be allowed to contact your family anymore and the religion will become the key factor in your life.

According to Catt (2002: 5), the decision-making process in democracy must be able to deal with conflict but produce results that all will accept. If those people whose ideas were rejected do not accept the legitimacy of the final decision, they may not abide by it and thus the structure of the state will be weakened. In reaching a decision some people will not get what they wanted, which again emphasises the group aspect of democracy. Democracy is at the centre of politics because it looks at ways to deal with power conflicts in society. Catt (2002: 111) states that in parliamentary systems the key role of Members of Parliament is to keep the government accountable to the people by scrutinising their actions. In presidential systems the assembly also has a scrutiny role as part of the checks and balances integral to the Madisonian model. A common and public form of scrutiny occurs when Members of Parliament ask ministers questions in the assembly. The opposition makes the government answer for its actions, and in parliaments with party discipline it is the opposition that does most of the questioning. In this way the government is made accountable to the voters and the voters are shown an alternative set of political leaders in action.

Everyone is not happy with the current system in *Divergent*, especially not a faction called Candor since at the end of the novel Candor creates a serum that enables them to control people who are injected with it. Jeanie, the Candor leader, takes Tris and Four as hostages and tells them that she wants to have an improved government: “Improved, and working toward a world in which people will live in wealth, comfort and prosperity” (*D*, 429). She says that they are sick of being ruled by Abnegation who are self-righteous and reject wealth and advancement. If a person wants to become one of the decision-makers, he could choose Abnegation in the Choosing Ceremony and then try to become a leader if they finish the initiation process. A person can only choose a faction once in their life. Jeanie thinks that the factionless and Abnegation are a drain to their sources (*D*, 429). This is a very right-wing way of thinking as Jeanie does not want to take care of those who are less fortunate. A person becomes a Factionless if they fail the initiation, many against their will and this means their hopes of becoming a member of a faction have been destroyed. There is no opposition in any of the

three novels or even a prime minister. However, *The Hunger Games* mentions that there is a president in Panem. The actions of those who make decisions are not questioned. There might be some dissatisfaction among the people, but none of these people are in high enough positions to question those who are in power, except in *Divergent* when Candor makes a plan with Dauntless to destroy their society.

The Handmaid's Tale does not mention that Gilead would be a democratic state and neither does *The Hunger Games* in relation to Panem. The difference between these two novels and *Divergent* is that Marcus, the Abnegation leader, states in the Choosing Ceremony that they are honouring a democratic philosophy in their society. He also paints a picture of a utopia where every person has a purpose: "In our factions, we find meaning, we find peace, we find life" (*D*, 43). Marcus belongs to the council that makes the decisions. The council members are chosen because of their impeccable character, but it turns out that Marcus is not morally impeccable as he used to abuse his son, Four (*D*, 329-330). The novel presents this naive idea that under any circumstance a person would act and behave according to their faction, but of course this turns out to be false. Christina, who becomes Tris' friend in Dauntless tells her that a boy named Peter used to pick up fights with children from other factions and blame them and pretend to be crying as people believed him, because he was a Candor member and Candor values honesty (*D*, 93).

2.3. Authoritarianism

According to Berch Berberoglu (1994: 64-65), the dominant classes in the authoritarian societies have legitimized their increasingly unpopular rule in order to maintain law and order and protect their private property and prevent revolution against the prevailing social system. The state adopts a technocratic approach with a focus on capital accumulation and economic growth, combined with severe repression of the working class and other laboring segments of society.

At the end of the *Handmaid's Tale*, Aunt Lydia encourages the handmaids to kill a man because he is a rapist. However, Offred's friend Moira reveals later on that this man was a politician and not a rapist (*HT*, 290-293). The ruling elite in Gilead uses its power to put down any resistance and any people they see as a threat. There are spies among the regular people of Gilead who work for the government. Their only purpose is to report any kind of rebellious behaviour (*HT*, 38, 175-178). These spies are called Eyes and they create a feeling of uncertainty: you can never be sure who is watching you and who you can trust. The Eyes create a similar feeling to that in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where Big Brother is always watching what you are doing and saying.

The people of Capitol and especially those who hold power in the Capitol, for example President Snow, belong to the dominant class in *The Hunger Games*. He is afraid of losing his status in Panem. Katniss and Peeta try to trick the gamemakers and make them believe that both Katniss and Peeta would eat poisonous berries while being televised for all the people of the different districts and Capitol to see and thus the Games would not have a winner at all. Haymitch, who is Katniss' and Peeta's mentor in the Hunger Games, tells her how she has to be very careful and play her cards right. Katniss tells Peeta: "It's the Capitol. They didn't like our stunt with the berries"... "It seemed too rebellious. So Haymitch has been coaching me through the last few days so I didn't make it worse (*HG*, 434)." The Capitol is very much aware of her actions in the Games with the berries, since her actions can be seen as revolutionary in Panem (*HG*, 451).

According to Philip M. Taylor (2003: 5), extreme measures used for propaganda are characteristic of authorities. Authoritarians who are unsure if they still can command the masses, must get general approval or at least get popular acquiescence. Propaganda is studied further in chapter "5.3. Propaganda".

In *The Hunger Games* every year before the picking starts, the mayor of District 12 tells the history of Panem and the uprisings against the Capitol, which became

the reason the Capitol created the Hunger Games. The people are told why the Games were created even though the mayor's speech is not all true and contains lies. The Hunger Games were created so the poor people of Panem would not start to rebel and the country would be kept in order. That is why Katniss' and Peeta's actions with the poisonous berries are seen as an evident threat to the existing social order and power structures. If Katniss and Peeta had indeed eaten the poisonous berries, the Games would not have a winner at all, which is against the rules as the Games is supposed to have only one winner, the last tribute surviving in the arena. President Snow is afraid of revolution and what Katniss' and Peeta's actions might lead to in the Games (*HG*, 434).

The Divergent people are seen as a threat in *Divergent* because the mind control serum does not work on them. They are considered especially dangerous in Dauntless, since Erudite leader Jeanine wants to use Dauntless members as soldiers to invade Abnegations and people who are Divergent can resist the serum. Tris learns that Divergent who are Dauntless tend to get killed (*D*, 257-258). This shows how much people who want power are willing to do to secure their power and stop any people who could be rebellious or any possibilities that their plans would go wrong.

2.4. Conclusions

The societies in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* resemble mostly authoritarian societies, but the social structure in *Divergent's* society does not come across as clearly. Authoritarian dominant classes want to retain the power and prevent revolution against the prevailing social system. They also want to repress the working-class segments of society. Noncomfortists and those who are seen as a threat to the prevailing social order are killed in *The Handmaid's Tale*. These include homosexuals and priests. They are set as an example to others of how not to behave. In *The Hunger Games* the people of districts are forced to fear the reaping for the Games each year, as you can never know if this year your name will be picked, just as Katniss thought the chances of her little sister Prim's

name being picked were slim. The people of the districts are the laboring segments of Panem. Authoritarianism seems to be mainly about keeping the people under control, so they do not have possibilities to make the power of the elite unstable. Preventing revolution and uprisings is the priority for the authoritarian elite.

There is a ruling elite in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games*. Fifty political leaders who belong to Abnegation and who are always chosen by their peers make the decisions in *Divergent*. The society in *Divergent* is closer to a democracy than the societies in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games*, but there are some fundamental problems in *Divergent* that make it impossible to consider its society a democracy. The problem is that the young people have to entirely abandon their family if they choose to become faction transfers. Mental and physical violence is also present in the Dauntless members' and initiates' lives, because violence is a part of the initiation process.

The way the factions are viewed in the society in *Divergent* is almost religious. The faction is supposed to be more important to a person than their family. Tris thinks: "More than family, our factions are where we belong. Can that possibly be right?" (*D*, 43). This quote sounds like a cult: the faction is supposed to mean everything to a person. Free will is not so free after all because no matter which faction you choose, the faction itself should be the most important aspect of your life. You have the freedom to choose your faction, but you do not have freedom of how much value you put on your chosen faction. If you fail the initiation to your new faction, you become a factionless and thus you do not belong to the society anymore.

3 THE NARRATOR PROTAGONIST IN DYSTOPIA

This chapter focuses on the narrators in the three different dystopian novels. The narrator in all of the novels is the protagonist, which means that the narrator in *The Handmaid's Tale* is Offred, *The Hunger Games* Katniss and *Divergent* Tris.

3.1. Timeline and narrator

All of the three novels have a first-person narrator and the present tense in order to create a feeling that the events in the novels are happening at the same time as the reader is reading the text. This is rather interesting because all three novels are taking place in an unknown future. Offred's description of her former life in *The Handmaid's Tale* indicates that her life before Gilead took place somewhere that seems modern and familiar to us. The world seemed to be very similar to the one we live now. Because the novel was published in 1985, perhaps Offred is describing how the world was in the 1980s. If so, it would be logical to think that Gilead was founded in the 1990s or in the beginning of the year 2000, but this depends on the reader's respective imagination. The time period of Offred's past is indicated when Offred describes the kind of job she had, the kind of relationships people had and the kind of clothes people wore:

She's wearing the kind of outfit Aunt Lydia told us was typical of Unwomen in those days, overall jeans with a green and mauve plaid shirt underneath and sneakers on her feet; the sort of thing Moira once wore, the sort of thing I can remember wearing, long ago, myself. (*HT*, 129)

Katniss in *The Hunger Games* and Tris in *Divergent* have never known anything but the dystopian societies. It is likely that the two novels are set further in the future than *The Handmaid's Tale*, as more time has gone by since the world we know now has come to an end and new societies, Panem and the dystopian version of Chicago, were founded. Dystopias can be seen as warning signs of where we as a society and humankind should not go. They take our current fears into extremes. If we take this into consideration as well as the narrator's present

tense, it is as if the dystopias are happening right now, our societies today have some glimpses of these what-not-to-do warning signs already. Offred even thinks: "For some, in some ways, things haven't changed at much" (*HT*, 58).

Unlike *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, Offred has a listener she is addressing in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Offred is telling some parts of her story on tapes and later on we hear how the tapes are received in the future. Offred reminds her readers that everything she says is not exactly as it seems. This makes her somewhat untrustworthy narrator:

It's impossible to say a thing exactly the way it was because what you say can never be exact, you always have to leave something out, there are too many parts, sides, crosscurrents, nuances, too many gestures, which could mean this or that, too many shapes, which can never be fully described, too many flavours, in the way or on the tongue, half-colours, too many. (*HT*, 144)

Even though *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* also have first person narrators in the form of Katniss and Tris, they do not portray any active listener or mention that the narrators would be telling their stories to somebody.

Throughout the story the listener Offred has can be interpreted as the reader as well, the you in *The Handmaid's Tale* is in a sense you, the readers who are reading the story. This creates a personal bond between the narrator and the readers as the readers learn about a secret Offred tells them. In the final chapter of *The Handmaid's Tale*, a professor called James Darcy Pieixoto analyses Offred's thirty tape records in the future after Gilead has collapsed. The professor does not let his students hear Offred's tapes and he claims they are probably fake and that we should not judge Gilead but to try to understand. This means that in the future Offred's story is being censored by a man who does not believe in her story.

Offred tells her story, she does not know everything about Gilead or what is happening, she knows only what a handmaid can know. She does not go to many places or on such adventures as Katniss and Beatrice do. That is, she is only allowed to stay inside and do groceries with another handmaid. The novel shifts

between what is happening to Offred in the present moment and what her life and the world used to be like before Gilead. Offred is comparing then and now and considering what has changed.

3.2. The narrator in dystopian Young Adult fiction in the 21st century

One could say that there has been a dystopian wave in the Young Adult fiction genre in the 21st century. Many novels have a young female protagonist including *Ashes of Twilight* by Kassy Tayler (2012), *The Killables* by Gemma Malley (2012) and *The Gender Game* by Bella Forrest (2016). *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are no exceptions.

According to Robyn McCallum (1999: 68), quest is the primary narrative structure used to depict the formation of subjectivity. Central characters are represented as internally fragmented and/or solipsistic, and their stories show a quest for a sense of identity which is stable, coherent, unique and whole. The unique, singular and essential self is an assumption which underlies a person's own sense of, or more specifically desire for, a single and stable personal identity within, and in relation, to the world and others. McCullum (1999: 68) argues that it is typical for the quest narrative that characters experience temporal, cultural or psychological displacement or marginalization to the extent that notions of selfhood are dependent upon and constructed within specific social, linguistic and historical contexts. Characters who are taken out of their familiar surroundings go through an identity transformation or crisis. Displacement can affect a fragmentation of the subject and social or cultural alienation. It can be used to foreground the social construction of subjectivity.

Katniss' decision to volunteer to go the Games is very unusual and rare because usually the tributes from District 12 never volunteer to take part in The Hunger Games as their chances are seen so minimal to survive in the Games. Katniss is displaced out of her familiar surroundings when she travels to Capitol and enters

the Games. She is not like the others as she thinks other tributes especially those who come from wealthier districts have much better chances of survival. Then again Peeta tells her that even his mother thinks Katniss might survive, which makes Katniss surprisingly strong candidate in some people's eyes back in her home district no matter her though background.

Tris wishes she could feel at home in Abnegation and easily fit in with her faction in *Divergent*. She goes through an inner battle to find herself and even her being a Divergent means she does not actually belong anywhere and lacks a stable identity. She belongs to a minority and she is culturally displaced out of her familiar surroundings when she becomes a Dauntless tribute.

Katniss is getting ready to go to the reaping for the Hunger Games and Tris is going to the Choosing Ceremony where she will choose her faction in *Divergent*. Both are also getting ready for the big events with their mothers and the mothers are helping their daughters to look presentable. The novels portray a child leaving home and getting ready to live on their own in the world. After the big events at the beginning of the novels, the daughters do not see their mothers or any members of their families for a very long time and they enter adventures with new people, some of whom they have never met before. The novels can be seen as dystopian coming-of-age stories: Katniss and Tris leave their homes behind and the world seems to throw very difficult obstacles on their way, which they overcome with their friends. Offred has also left her former life behind in *The Handmaid's Tale* but in a different way as the change in social structure did not happen suddenly. Katniss and Tris have never lived under a different social order whereas Offred has. Life seems mysterious and dangerous at the end of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, but the girls are independent actors who seem to be able to face anything that will come on their way.

Sara K. Day (2013: 4) discusses what is typical for Young Adult genre novels with a female narrator. The story usually has a first-person narrator who self-consciously tells information and who shows an awareness of her reader by using

direct address or a general construction of the fact that the narrator's tale is disclosure or confession. These constructions are highlighted by the content of the texts, as for example, the narrators' experiences with friends or romantic affection. The narrators' stories frequently reveal a desire to share personal, private feelings, questions and struggles as well as a hesitation to share them with other characters within the novel. The connection between the narrator and the listener is created by concerns about privacy, secrecy, and trust, which then allow for an understanding of the narrative relationship as distinctly personal and intimate. These qualities are relevant and prevalent in contemporary American Young Adult literature, which is very much associated with revelatory first-person narration.

Both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are Young Adult fiction novels and they certainly have some typical traits of the genre. *The Hunger Games* starts with Katniss telling what her life is like now and how things are the way they are for her personally. Later the bigger picture of Katniss' dystopian society is revealed when the mayor of District Twelve tells how Panem was founded and what led to its rise.

Katniss' family situation is rather complicated. When her father died, her mother became depressed. Katniss tells the reader things that she does not necessarily say out loud to anybody, as for example, her frustration towards her mother comes across in her inner monologue: "I try to remember that when all I can see is the woman who sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned into skin and bones. I try to forgive her for my father's sake. But to be honest I'm not the forgiving type" (*HG*, 10). This has resulted in Katniss becoming the one who tries to take care both of her mother and sister. When Katniss volunteers to go to the 74th Annual Hunger Games instead of her little sister Prim, she leaves her mother and sister behind and enters a new world. She gets to know new people, including Peeta, who is also picked to go to the Games with her and who becomes the closest new person to her.

Like *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent* starts with Tris describing her everyday life. She also reveals to the reader that she is not suitable for Abnegation and she cannot say this out loud in Abnegation, since Abnegation is the faction that values selflessness and modesty: “I am not sure I can live this life of obligation any longer. I am not good enough” (*D*, 35). Tris’ family life is very different compared to Katniss as her family takes care of her and not the other way around. Tris goes through an inner struggle when the Choosing Ceremony is coming closer and closer. She knows she is not fit for Abnegation, her family’s faction but she does not want to disappoint or embarrass her family either by becoming a faction transfer. Just like Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, Tris leaves her family behind after choosing Dauntless as her new faction.

3.3. The female protagonist narrator

Sharon Wilson (2013: 158) argues that Atwood creates an alternative world for her protagonist to the one which is usually possible for women in dystopias. Atwood, Collins and Roth bring something new to the table because their heroes are female, which is not the case in classic dystopias such as Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for example. According to Wilson (2013: 158), the narrator is the protagonist which makes the protagonist more than just an anonymous character. This chapter focuses on what similarities the narrators in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* have and what is a typical modern dystopian narrator.

Maria Lauret (2002:2) argues that American feminist fiction of the 1970s and 1980s was liberating literature, a female body of texts which sought to liberate both women and writing from the constraints of masculinist double standards in literature and in life.

Offred’s social status as well as the laws and norms she must obey are there for her only because she is a woman. *The Handmaid’s Tale* shows the reader a world

full of laws that take all the options away from the protagonist and leave her powerless without any possibilities to get out of her current situation. Offred has almost lost all hope when the story begins in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The readers get to know Offred's mother and her best friend Moira from the flashbacks of her past. Offred's mother was a devoted feminist. Aunt Lydia shows the handmaids a video of the old days in the Red Center and Offred sees her mother in this video. Offred's mother did not want a typical heteronormative relationship with a man and therefore she decided to have a child alone when she was thirty-seven years old: "I don't want a man around, what use are they except for ten seconds' worth of half babies. A man is just a woman's strategy for making other women" (*HT*, 129-130). Offred's mother also tells her that her father was not up to be a parent. Her mother comments on Offred's father and all the men in a very negative way, which reads somewhat bitter because of what happened between her and Offred's father (*HT*, 131). Now Offred's only purpose in life is to produce more children in the world. Offred's mother believed that that the only good thing about men was that they could be used to make children. There was also another side that believed that women's only purpose is to make children. Both sides existed but the side who saw women only being there for bearing children became the main ideology in Gilead.

Offred's mother seems to be disappointed in Offred because she is living the stereotypical family life. Offred's closest friend is a rebellious character called Moira and we see Moira's nature in the way she speaks. Commander takes Offred to a place he calls the club. He then explains how it is in men's nature to look for variety in women and how in the old days women bought many different clothes so that they would trick men into thinking they were a different woman every time they were wearing something unusual. Now as women are not able to choose their clothes freely anymore, the men, or more precisely men in the higher social classes, go to the club to seek for the company of other women. The women are not in the club of their free will, but have done something that has caused them the punishment of being in the club and doing what the men want. Moira is one of these women and she tells Offred: "What the hell are you doing here?" Moira says

then. “Not that it isn’t great to see you. But it’s not so great for you. What’d you do wrong? Laugh at his dick?” (*HT*, 255).

Katniss’ life is not determined by her gender in *The Hunger Games*, as Offred’s is. Katniss’ social class is what it is because of where she lives. Katniss has also taken up a role that is often seen as masculine as she is the main provider for her family. Nicola Balkind (2014) writes that *The Hunger Games*’ Katniss Everdeen is one of the strongest, stereotypically masculine and atypically gender-defined heroes of any recent book or film in Young Adult fiction.

Katniss faces difficulties when she and Peeta are picked to go to the Hunger Games and they arrive in the Capitol by train. Capitol expects her to act in a typically feminine way, which is completely foreign to Katniss. Peeta seems to be more emphatic and kind of the two and even Katniss’ and Peeta’s mentor Haymitch tells Katniss this: “ ‘What’s Peeta’s approach? Or am I not allowed to ask?’ I say. ‘Likeable. He has sort of self-deprecating humour naturally’, says Haymitch. ‘Whereas you open your mouth you come across more as sullen and hostile’ ” (*HG*, 135).

Before the Hunger Games, Peeta tells in a television interview that he is in love with Katniss and Katniss gets furious about this:

“You are a fool,” Haymitch says in disgust. “Do you think he hurt you? That boy just gave you something you could never achieve on your own,” He made me look weak!” I say. “He made you look desirable! And let’s face it. You can use all the help you can get in that department. You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do. You’re all they’re talking about. The star-crossed lovers from District Twelve!” says Haymitch. (*HG*, 157-158)

Haymitch also tells Katniss that all the boys back home love her and she is a heartbreaker now, which will get her more sponsors in the Games. Katniss is forced into the traditional female role and she reacts in shock, as she sees this kind of behaviour as weakness. It is also interesting to notice how two male characters arrange the change in Katniss’ public image to become more feminine without

letting her know and thus she witnesses Peeta's television interview at the same time with all of Panem.

Katniss as a protagonist raises the question: Does a female protagonist have to suppress her femininity and take masculine qualities to be considered a strong protagonist? It is also questionable whether Katniss was created to be a somewhat androgynous character to be relatable to the masses and the male audience. Even in recent history it seems that if a book or a film has a female leading character, it is considered a book or film for women, but should the protagonist be a man, the book or a film is supposedly meant for everybody, both women and men.

Nicola Balkind (2014) discusses how Katniss is leaning towards the masculine and she is bucking the popular culture trend of the helpless girlfriend who needs to be saved by her man, since Collins presents Katniss as the strong one. However, Katniss still needs Peeta's warmth and decency. Katniss has qualities Peeta lacks and vice versa. Katniss appears unemotional at times and she is often disconnected from emotional triggers or is actively screening herself from painful thoughts and situations. *The Hunger Games* also shows a more vulnerable and emotional side of Katniss when her friend Rue from District 11 dies in the Games: "For a moment, I sit there, watching my tears drip down on her face. Rue's cannon fires. I lean forward and press my lips against her temple" (*HG*, 275). Cannon fires are shot every time a tribute dies in the Games. Katniss also picks up flowers and buries Rue in them but she does this as a rebellious act against the Capitol. The cameras would have to show Rue in the flowers as they show how the dead tributes are carried away from the arena (*HG*, 277).

Similarly, Tris' life is not determined by her gender in *Divergent*. Her social class at the beginning of the novel is determined by the faction where she belongs, which is Abnegation. In the Choosing Ceremony she chooses Dauntless, which then determines what her life will be like. But she is also Divergent, which means the serums used in aptitude tests and later on in Candor's simulation do not work on her. She is in constant danger because she is Divergent.

3.4. Conclusions

The Handmaid's Tale, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* all have a first-person narrator who reveals their true thoughts and ideas to the reader, which for one reason or another they are not allowed or able to express in the dystopian society. All of the protagonists are female, in *The Handmaid's Tale* the narrator's gender determines the life she is leading, whereas in *The Hunger Games* Katniss is forced to fit the stereotypical female role for the Capitol and even for the benefit for her own survival in the Games: the more feminine traits she adapts, the more likely she is to get sponsors, as Haymitch tells her. Tris' gender does not play as big role in *Divergent*. As everybody is treated the same without any exceptions, Tris has to fight against boys who are much bigger than her. This shows that treating everybody the same does not make the process equal because for example Tris is very small and other initiates are much stronger than her.

Maria Lauret (2002: 2) asks: "How do we read the texts of twenty years of political and literary debate around gender in the light of present concerns?" This seems almost ironic because *The Handmaid's Tale* is current right now even though it was first published in the 1980s. Michelle Oberman (2019) writes that it was only in 1992 that the Supreme Court overturned Pennsylvania's law requiring a woman seeking an abortion to prove she had first notified her husband. Recently, all eyes were on Alabama in May 2019 when news broke that the state has allowed abortion to be only performed if the mother's life is at risk, no other exceptions allowed. Leah C. Stokes (2019) writes that doctors performing abortions could be sentenced to ninety-nine years in prison. In 2018, a Gallup poll found that 79 percent of Americans supported abortion in at least some circumstances, which indicates that the abortion law in for example Alabama does not represent the opinions of most Americans.

According to Stokes (2019), in the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey, Data for Progress estimated what the state-by-state support for abortion bans was. Even 25 percent of people did not support banning abortion in any state.

Even in Alabama, only one in five people support abortion bans. Similarly, many people in *The Handmaid's Tale*, such as the handmaids, do not approve the oppressing laws of Gilead. Fred, who is the commander of Offred's household, sums up this ideology: "Better never means better for everyone... It always means worse, for some" (*HT*, 222).

As *Divergent* is a Young Adult fiction novel, the Choosing Ceremony and the possibility to leave your faction and enter a new one can be interpreted to symbolise a young adult leaving their childhood home for the opportunity to, for example, study or work in another city or town. If an initiate fails the initiation process in *Divergent*, they become a factionless who are completely shut out of the society. This may represent a situation where a college or university student drops out of school. Such persons might have a harder time for example finding a job and making a living and thus they are in more danger of becoming an outsidse in our society. The same holds true for *The Hunger Games*, which is also a Young Adult fiction novel. Katniss is getting ready to go to the reaping for the Hunger Games and Tris is going to the Choosing Ceremony where she will choose her faction. Both are also getting ready for the big events with their mothers and the mothers are helping their daughters to look presentable. It is as if the beginning of the novels symbolises a child leaving home and getting ready to live on their own in the world. After the big events at the beginning of the novels, the daughters do not see their mothers or any members of their families for a very long time and they have the adventures with new people some of whom they have never met before. The novels can be seen as dystopian coming-of-age stories: Katniss and Tris leave their familiar homes behind and the world seems to throw very difficult obstacles on their way, which they overcome with their friends. Life seems mysterious and dangerous at the end of the novels, but the girls are independent actors who seem to be able to face anything that will come on their way, which is typical for Young Adult fiction.

4 SOCIAL CLASS

This chapter focuses on the division between those who have power and basic things in life like security and enough food and those who are the targets of this power who have a lack of these basic needs. The novels do not state clearly that there are for example an upper class, middle class or a lower class. Rather, the division is very black and white especially in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games*, whereas *Divergent* does not divide people this bluntly.

Social class can be defined in different ways. According to Susan T. Fisk and Hazel Rose Markus (2012: 2), some scholars use education as a way of distinguishing that those who have a college degree belong to middle class and those who do not belong to a working class. Others use occupation or income as factors to categorise people into classes and some use subjective assessment such as a perceived ranking in the person's community or perceived financial security.

In *The Handmaid's Tale* Offred has a degree but women's education has lost its meaning in Gilead. Now Offred does not have any income and she owns very few things, whereas for example the commander owns a house and he has an income as he works. Offred's ranking in Gilead is low as she is a handmaid. *The Handmaid's Tale* shows how Offred has lost everything, but at the same time aunts, for example Aunt Lydia, tell the handmaids how precious they are and how things are better for them now in Gilead. A person's sex determines their social class more than income or education: if you are a woman, there is only so much you can do and have. It is clear that the handmaids' situation has become worse in Gilead and thus there is contradiction when the aunts try to convince them and almost brainwash them to believe that everything that is happening to the handmaids is merely for their own good.

In *The Hunger Games* Katniss lives in poverty and her ranking in society is the lowest as she lives in the poorest district in District 12. Her family does not have financial security, since Katniss has to hunt illegally for food and she has added

her name more times in the Hunger Games picking to get more food. Katniss' grandparents ran an apothecary in the nicer part of District 12, but when Katniss' mother met her husband they moved to Seam, which is not as pleasant an area. When Katniss' father died, her mother became depressed and the family did not have enough food, which is the reason why Katniss started to hunt illegally (*HG*, 9).

The lines between social classes are not as clear in *Divergent* as Tris comes from Abnegation where people are used to having less by their free will. Nevertheless, her family has somewhat high position in the society as both of her parents work for the government, her mother manages city improvement projects and her father is a political leader (*D*, 31-33). Status in society does not determine how much a person has, your faction does. All the political leaders come from Abnegation as it is considered wise to choose leaders from a faction that values selflessness. Even so, each faction has their own leaders, for example a woman called Jeanie is the leader of the Erudite, the faction dedicated to knowledge, intelligence, curiosity and resourcefulness.

4.1. Upper class

Fisk and Markus (2012: 2) claim that people who belong to middle-class have a psychological advantage, which means a sense of ownership, influence, entitlement and control over oneself and the world. They see themselves as independent actors, free to choose and to create their future paths.

The Handmaid's Tale has a division between those in society who obey many rules and those who are free to do almost as they please. People have different occupations, the marthas who help with the housekeeping, the guardians who help the commanders and the handmaids whose only purpose is to have children. The commanders have more power as they are the heads of the households.

Offred thinks about her old life and how she was free to do what she wanted and there were no boundaries (*HT*, 239). She used to be the kind of free actor Fisk and Markus mention, but now she has lost all her freedom completely. Offred also thinks about how she used to have her own money she had earned herself and this made her feel in control (*HT*, 34).

The people of Capitol are the highest of the society in Panem in *The Hunger Games*. They live in luxury while the poor people in Panem suffer from hunger. During the Dark Days, when there was a war in Panem, people fought against the elite, which means the Capitol (*HG*, 21). People are told that this led to chaos and now they need to be ruled and tributes have to be sent to the Games to remind people of the horrors that were before the Capitol arose (*HG*, 21). The people of Panem are forced to treat The Games as a festivity and a sporting event that puts every district against each other (*HG*, 21).

You become eligible for the reaping the day you turn twelve. That year, your name is entered once. At thirteen, twice. And so on and so on until you reach the age of eighteen, the final year of eligibility, when your name goes into the pool seven times. (*HG*, 15)

4.2. Lower class

Usually in Western societies we think people have some possibility to increase their income. People have different ways to try to better their social status and gain wealth. *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* show us worlds where the poor people have not had any chances to try to better their lives and improve their situation. In *Divergent* factionless are the poorest and they have no possibilities to try to improve their situation. Abnegation members live in the poorest conditions of the factions, but they have chosen their situation.

Capitol can be seen as the elite that rules Panem in *The Hunger Games*. The resources of the districts are exported to support the people of Capitol. This means that many of the districts are very poor except Districts 1 and 2 that are close to

the Capitol. District 1 the the richest district among the twelve as it produces luxury items for the Capitol. The Capitol's military is situated in District 2, which is the main supplier of the Peacekeepers. District 3 is the supplier of electricals, firearms and automobiles to the Capitol. District 4's main export is fishing. The main export of District 5 is power. District 6 gives Capitol medicine and District 7's main export to the Capitol is lumber and woods. District 9 has factories and its contribution is grains. The Capitol's main supply of livestock comes from District 10. District 11 is one of the poorest districts of Panem and its main export is food, which is directly sent to the Capitol. Katniss' hometwon, District 12, is the poorest district and the main occupation is mining.

It is very clear how each district has its own purpose and product for Capitol. The way Panem works can be seen to reflect colonialism: each district has one or a few items or goods they produce for Capitol's benefit. District 11 is one of the poorest districts and the people suffer from hunger even though they produce food. This seems almost ironic and it underlines just how cruel Capitol really is. We can mirror the situation in Panem to contemporary consumerism. Nowadays people in for example Europe and North America buy clothes made by big brands who produce their products in poor countries as it is cheaper. The people who work in these clothing factories are usually very poor. The people of different districts in *The Hunger Games* do not have any other option than to keep producing what Capitol wants at the same time as they live in extreme poverty. To make the situation even more desperate, the people of the districts have to live in constant fear of the Hunger Games.

Ania Loomba (1998: 2) defines colonialism as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. Modern colonialism did not only extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own. There was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries. Slaves, indentured labour and raw materials were transported to manufacture

goods in the metropolis. This is exactly what is happening in *The Hunger Games* between the Capitol and the districts.

When we talk about colonialism we can naturally also talk about slavery. According to William E. Channing (2014: 12), the slave owner claims that the slave is his property and thus the slave lives and works for him. The slave has to make another's will his law no matter if it is adverse to his own. A slave owner has a right to the slave's time and strength, a right to the fruits of his labour and a right to task him without his consent. The slave owner may dispose of his person, his industry, his labour and the slave cannot do anything about this.

In this sense, Offred is a slave in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The commander and his wife Serena even have a right to take Offred's child if she would become pregnant. Offred has lost the right to decide about her own body and even about her words as she has limited possibilities to speak and when she can speak, she has to repeat the same phrases as all the other handmaids. Offred has had to make another's will, that is, the commander's will and Gilead's rules, her own law which is very much adverse to her own well-being.

Similarly, the people in the poor districts can be seen as slaves in *The Hunger Games*. Each district has its own product they have to produce but the people in the districts do not get any rights for these products as they go to Capitol, which can be seen as the slave owner in this case. The Capitol has even the right to decide who gets to live and who has to fight for their own survival by killing others in the Games.

According to Fisk and Markus (2012: 2), an independent sense of self is out of reach for many working-class Americans. Working-class status denies people the material resources, the authority or status and the cultural knowledge or information that is needed to influence the world according to personal preference. This is also the reason why working-class people cannot experience the self as an independent and freely choosing actor.

What is interesting in *The Handmaid's Tale* is that Offred used to be a middle-class woman who had been able to choose her career path and what she wanted to pursue in her life. When things changed and Gilead was founded, she fell on the social ladder.

In *The Hunger Games* those who are poor and starving can add their name more times in the reaping to get tesserae, which is worth a meager one year's supply of oil and grain for one person (HG, 16). Katniss has done this every year to get food for her family and now at the age of sixteen her name will be in the reaping twenty times (HG, 16). Katniss has also made sure that her little sister Prim has not had to add her name extra times for the reaping (HG, 15). There is even some slight class division in poorer districts like District 12 for example. Madge, who is the mayor's daughter, is wealthy enough so she has not been forced to put herself in extra danger by adding her name more times in the reaping. Katniss's friend Gale is rather bitter about this because his name will be in the reaping 42 times this year (HG, 15). In *The Hunger Games*, by being poor you are in a worse situation when it comes to the reaping.

By now, it is clear how disadvantaged the poor are and how Katniss takes care of her family because every year she sacrifices her safety so her little sister does not have to. It seems the tributes from the poor districts are in the Games only as entertainment for people of the Capitol. Everybody knows they do not stand a chance against those tributes who come from wealthier districts. According to Fisk and Markus (2012: 2), people are always aware of their ranking in the society. Katniss is very aware of her ranking and of the abilities she is lacking because of her background. Hence, she thinks she belongs to the group that will be killed before the most interesting entertainment begins.

Still, Katniss brings an element of surprise to the Games with her survival skills, because she has gone through horrible times and thus knows how to survive in extreme living conditions. She has been hungry before, she has hunted animals

and now she has to hunt people in order to survive, which means that nothing is really new to her. She will be hungry again in the Games and she will still hunt living creatures just like before. This is something the tributes from rich districts have not had to go through in their lives. They might have practised hunting and they might have learned about starvation, but they have not actually had to do anything before for their own survival.

The situation is different with Katniss and Tris in *Divergent* compared to Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*, since they have always lived in the dystopian world and Offred has not. Offred has witnessed the change in society, whereas Katniss and Tris can only hear from those who have power what they say has happened. This means that *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are set further in the future than *The Handmaid's Tale*. Katniss has always been among the lower class. She comes from a district where hunger is the norm and she goes out of her way to bring bread to the table (*HG*, 22, 6). People who lack any other way of rising on the social ladder get a chance in the Games, even though for most of them the cost is death. Still, the tributes get to enjoy great food and fame in all its glory and horror. The winner of the Games gets an income for life from the Capitol, a special status in their district and a house in part of their home district called the Victor's Village, where they get to live with their family (*HG*, 51, 373, 378).

Young people from different districts think differently due to their class status. Katniss was starving when she was younger and her living situation is not exactly something that would have given her strength for the Hunger Games. Katniss thinks the winner is usually a tribute who comes from a richer district and has been trained for the Games. It is illegal to train for the Games before one actually becomes a tribute, but still the tributes from richer districts have been preparing for the Games their whole lives. These tributes see winning as a huge honour, whereas those who come from poor districts, such as Katniss, see the Games as a death sentence. The only living winner District 12 has is Haymitch and Katniss sees that he is in quite a bad way now with his drinking problem (*HG*, 53).

Just like Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, Tris is only used to very plain food in *Divergent*. People in Abnegation only eat plain food because extravagance is self-indulgent and unnecessary (*D*, 66). They cannot have anything special for themselves, because Abnegation is based on selflessness and thus people in this faction live in voluntary poverty. Factionless are the lowest of the society because unlike people in Abnegation, their poverty is not voluntary. After Tris has taken the initiation test that indicates what faction is most suitable for her, she wonders if the result is that she is not cut out for any faction:

To live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorced from the society, separated from the most important thing in life; community. My mother told me once that we can't survive alone, but even if we could, we wouldn't want to. Without a faction, we have no purpose and no reason to live. (*D*, 20)

Faction is the most important thing in the world and being factionless is the worst thing that can happen to somebody in *Divergent*. The factionless live in sewer systems and empty subways. Understandably, their living conditions are very unhygienic. They do the work no one else wants, so they are janitors, construction workers and garbage collectors. They also make fabric, operate trains and drive buses. In return, they get some food and clothing (*D*, 25). It seems that these jobs resemble pity jobs that have been given to factionless, because in a contemporary society for example bus drivers and janitors would get a salary, which factionless do not get. It could be argued that factionless are kept in this severe poverty on purpose. If society would have a mass of people who are forced to be detached from the rest of the society, it would be a possibility that these people would start to rebel. However, since this mass is kept in poverty, their energy goes into trying to survive. The us versus them kind of thinking can be seen here, because even though Abnegation tries to help the factionless, they do not put all their time and effort into this. The decision makers also come from Abnegation and perhaps they would have more possibilities to try to make things better for the factionless. The factionless are seen as other and through Tris' narrative we see how she does not really want to be in contact with them. For instance, when she sees a factionless person: "A stern voice in my head says, Duck your head and keep walking" (*D*, 25).

4.3. Appearance

The handmaids have to wear red outfits and white wings on their heads that prevent them from seeing and being seen. The handmaids do not get even the basic hygiene products such as body lotions, because the wives see the handmaids as a threat and thus they do not want the handmaids to look attractive (*HT*, 18, 40, 107). This means that affecting the way somebody looks becomes a mean of control. The wives use their control and power over the handmaids and decide how they should look.

When the tributes arrive to the Capitol, they are given makeovers for the Hunger Games. The Capitol and other districts do not see how they actually look and how malnourished some of them are. Katniss spends more than three hours in the Remake Centre before she even sees her stylist for the Games. Her body is scrubbed, her nails have been reshaped and coloured and her body hair is removed: “My legs, arms, torso, underarms and parts of my eyebrows have been stripped of the stuff, leaving me like a plucked bird, ready for roasting” (*HG*, 70-71). The Capitol will not see the reality and the horrible conditions where the tributes come from and how malnourished some of them are, because the tributes talk only about trivial matters in the interviews before entering the Games. Therefore nobody will actually know anything real about them and the conditions they come from. The poor, including Katniss, are recreated into a form that is familiar to the rich and so Katniss is adapted into a new kind of society and her social class is erased for the Capitol (*HG*, 74–76, 145).

People do not have much choice in what they wear and every year they try put on the most festive and appropriate clothes they own for the picking: “‘Wear something pretty’, he says flatly. At home, I find my mother and sister are ready to go. My mother wears a fine dress from her apothecary days” (*HG*, 17–18).

When Katniss’ and Peeta’s train arrives in the Capitol, Katniss notices how different the people look compared to District 12: “The oddly dressed people with

bizarre hair and painted faces who have never missed a meal” (*HG*, 68). When Katniss arrives to Capitol she meets her team and they give her a transformation. After her transformation, she looks more familiar to the Capitol, that is, she looks more like they do and her social class and where she comes from are faded out: “You know, now that we’ve got rid of all the hair and filth, you’re not horrible at all!” (*HG*, 72).

Divergent’s Tris comes from a faction called Abnegation, which values selflessness and helping others. This is why Tris cannot usually look at herself in the mirror and she wonders why her mother is not complaining that she is looking at herself before going to the Choosing Ceremony (*D*, 2). People in Abnegation have to hide their beauty and they have to dress in gray clothes and have a plain hairstyle (*D*, 2-6). The reason for this is that it would be easier for people to forget themselves and others to forget them as well and thus people from other factions have hard time telling people from Abnegation apart because they look so similar to one another (*D*, 11).

When Tris is going through the initiation to Dauntless, she goes through a makeover. Christina, who is her friend, helps her to get new clothes and does her make up. Tris also decides to get a tattoo and she is sure that this tattoo will place another wedge between her and her family because Abnegation does not approve of any body (*D*, 90). Unlike Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, Tris is not forced to change her looks but the pressure from other initiates and the Dauntless faction is strong.

Both Katniss and Tris go through makeovers when their lives change: Katniss when she becomes a tribute for the Hunger Games and Tris when she becomes a Dauntless initiate: “We’re half in, half out right now. If we want all the way in, we should look the part” (*D*, 85). Katniss’ home District 12 is a poor district and people do not have money to spend on cosmetics, whereas Tris’ faction Abnegation sees cosmetics as a vanity and waste of time. In order to fit into their new lives they need to adapt to a modern Western way of how a woman should

look, because otherwise they are unfit and do not fulfill their place or the social class they are a part of now. Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* goes through a transformation as well but her transformation is the opposite. She was used to wearing short skirts and high heels, but now as a handmaid she always has to have her red outfit and she does not have any access to cosmetics. Katniss and Tris go from natural look to the complete opposite, whereas Offred used to look like a typical western woman and now she looks as natural as possible.

It is questionable whether this change in appearance happens because the social class of the protagonist is changing. It is evident that Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* has lost her middle-class status and she belongs to a lower class now. The poor districts in *The Hunger Games* see the Games as a death sentence, because the tributes from wealthier districts have enough food and they have prepared for the Games for their whole lives and thus they increase their chance of winning the Games. The winner of the Hunger Games gets to live more luxurious life than what Katniss is used to. This means that even though the odds of winning the Games seem very unlikely, Katniss could possibly ascend in the social ladder if she were to win the Games. The social class is not as evident in *Divergent* as different factions are supposed to be equal and so no one faction is higher than the other. Different factions only have different rules about appearance.

4.4. Conclusions

The Handmaid's Tale and *The Hunger Games* have especially distinction division between those who have power and those who do not. In *Divergent* people have more of a say in the matter, as they can choose Abnegation as their faction when they are 16 in the Choosing Ceremony and the leaders are chosen from Abnegation. People can make the decision about their faction only once and if they fail the initiation they become factionless, which means they are completely out of society and have no possibility to become members of society ever again. In fact, Jeanie, the Candor leader, wants change and she starts a coup d'état.

Offred used to belong to middle-class. She has a higher education and used to be able to choose the kind of life she wanted, whereas now she has lost her freedom in all areas, for example working, the autonomy of her body and freedom of speech. She is the only one who knew what it was like to belong to a different social class in a society that was completely different. Katniss and Tris do not have this experience, their social class has never changed nor has the society where they live.

Both Katniss and Tris enter a new social class, Katniss when she becomes a tribute and Tris when she chooses Dauntless. Both of them go through makeovers to fit their new surroundings. Offred, however, remains in the natural state as a handmaid as handmaids are not allowed to have any luxuries. The change is involuntary for Katniss and Offred, whereas Tris has more say in how she wishes to change her appearance. Still both Katniss and Tris have the pressure to change to fit their new roles, Katniss as a tribute in the Games and Tris as an initiate of Dauntless. Katniss and Tris sway away from the natural as Tris gets tattoos and Katniss is made to get rid of her body hair and use bold make up and clothes. This is different compared to Offred as she is as natural as possible.

5 THE POWER OF THE STATE

This chapter studies different ways in which society and government control people in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. People who hold power or want to have more power in the modern dystopian novels use violence and propaganda to control people, hide certain information or view certain people in a way that is beneficial to them.

5.1. Reasons for dystopia and the warning signs

According to Louisa MacKay Demerjian (2016: 48), in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries we find a prevalence of dystopias concerned with cynicism, mistrust of government, worries about technology and environmental fears such as fear for the future of our planet. The source of the problems in these recent dystopias has changed from political causes to environmental ones. In the twentieth century dystopias reflected the anxieties generated by the unstable economic and political conditions that produced the Depression, the Second World War and the Cold War. Such dystopias blamed totalitarian governments for problems in the world. Now current dystopias invoke environmental catastrophes for the upheavals. Quite often intentional or unintentional human actions have started the catastrophes. There is not enough (or good enough) government to do something about climate change or to control greedy, lawless corporations, whereas previously the reason was totalitarian government. As the dystopian situation has shifted from government to human nature, the solution in order to the problem has also shifted. Governments can be changed and improved through political or military means but if human nature is the problem, then we must look to more radical solutions in order to change human nature itself.

The reasons for the dystopian situation in *The Handmaid's Tale* are that the air was full of chemicals, rays, radiation and the water swarmed with toxic molecules that cause the fertility to decrease (*HT*, 122). The reasons in *The Hunger Games* were droughts, storms, fires, the encroaching sea and finally a war that followed these natural disasters (*HG*, 20). The previous societies, that is, contemporary

societies, were unable to control these natural disasters and thus the result was the end of the world as we know it.

According to Demerjian (2016: 48), dystopias are meant to warn readers of the dangerous course we are following. They argue that most of the ills that threaten our extinction as a species come from human action, inaction, stubbornness or laziness. These dystopias accuse humanity of greed and failure to face the consequences of our actions. Instead of political dictators, the agents in some recent dystopias are scientists or alien species ostensibly motivated by the praiseworthy aim of saving humanity from extinction.

This is also where *Divergent* differs from *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games*. The reason for dystopia is the human personality or humankind's tendency towards evil that caused the wars in the world (*D*, 42). That is why factions sought to eradicate qualities they believed responsible for the world's disarray (*D*, 42).

Demerjian (2016: 48) mentions that some dystopias use alien and unhumans as the solutions for the errors in humankind. *Divergent* does not do so, but some science-fiction elements can be seen in the technology that is used in the novel, such as, the serum that enables Erudite to control the minds of Dauntless members. Evil has not been erased from the world in *Divergent* as violence still exists. This makes the story somewhat more realistic, since the aim is to erase all the evil from the world. Of course, that is not possible as humans will make mistakes and bad decisions that involve violence in any circumstances.

I cannot agree with Demerjian's claim that modern dystopias do not show totalitarian regime as the reason for dystopias, as this is certainly not the case with Young Adult dystopias as we have seen. The topic of totalitarian regime is looked further into in chapter 2. Demerjian's book *Age of Dystopia* was published in 2016 and many popular dystopian Young Adult fiction novels were published by then, including *The Hunger Games*. It is possible she has not taken Young Adult genre into account in the study.

According to Maria Lauret (2002: 167), reproductive politics, the family and the role of motherhood in women's lives are the main issues that social and political interest groups (religious, economic, white supremacist, anti-communist and anti-feminist) focus on. These are known as the New Right in American politics in the mid to late 1970s. Lauret goes on to describe *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood as one of the best-known novels of this era.

The reason why the fertility of women decreased in *The Handmaid's Tale* was all the chemicals and unnatural things in the nature. The solution for this new situation came to be the extremist Christian values and a society where women lost their freedom.

5.2. Control and freedom

According to C.S. Ferns (1999: 14), those in power believe that they are actually doing good. The patriarchal authority figures share the idea that authority is a duty rather than a matter of self-interest. The aspiration remains: the creation of a better, more rational social order, from whose all-embracing security the citizens cannot help but benefit.

Both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* show violent events to the public as a warning and as a way to control the masses. *The Handmaid's Tale* has the Wall where killed bodies are put on display for others to see as a warning: "We're supposed to look: this is what they are there for, hanging on the Wall. Sometimes they'll be there for days, until there's a new batch, so as many people as possible will have the chance to see them" (*HT*, 42). People who the government considers criminals are killed and put on the Wall, including a priest and homosexuals (*HT*, 53). As mentioned above, Aunt Lydia tells the handmaids to kill a man because he is a rapist, but later on Moira reveals that the man was just a politician. The daughters and wives are eagerly watching when the handmaids kill the man (*HT*, 291-292).

Offred often thinks about her earlier life and the freedom she used to have. She was earning her own money and she could wear any clothes she wanted. She even thinks about how having her own soap was having freedom and control (*HT*, 34). Aunt Lydia tells the handmaids: “There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are given freedom from. Don’t underrate it” (*HT*, 34). Here, it is interesting to see how the upper class and Aunt Lydia who falls somewhere in the middle when it comes to social class, think freedom is something that is given to others, it is not a basic human right or something one can just have. Offred sees a store that used to be a film theatre. Offred thinks how women used to go to film theatres by themselves and they could make their own decisions. Aunt Lydia has told the handmaids that their society was dying and they had too much choice (*HT*, 35). These brief mentions in *The Handmaid’s Tale* can be very self-evident for somebody like Offred, but they show readers how women now have lost their freedom completely. It is also interesting to see how for example Aunt Lydia portrays the lack of freedom and opportunities as protecting women. She always seems to have a reason that is based on protection and safety.

Suzanne Collins claims she was channel surfing between a reality television contest and footage of the war in Iraq when she started to think about *The Hunger Games* novel. She remembers she was tired and the lines began to blur in an unsettling way. Collins also talks about how her father who was an officer in the US air force, was sent to serve in Vietnam in 1968 and how she saw clips of that war on television. (Walker, Independent)

The Hunger Games tells a story about the Games that are shown on television for the whole Panem to watch and thus the people of Panem see how the children in the Games are killed. There is also an aspect of humiliation in the Hunger Games that comes across as sadistic: “To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event putting every district against the others” (*HG*, 21). *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *The*

Hunger Games show violence as entertainment. However, the victims have never agreed to this horrific scheme, but the people who hold the power in these societies force the victims into these situations.

Violence is an essential part of *Divergent*. When all the new sixteen-year-olds have decided their faction, the Dauntless initiates have to jump onto a moving train. When the train is getting closer to the Dauntless headquarters, the new initiates are supposed to jump off of the train. One Dauntless born girl fails to reach the roof and dies. Her arms and legs are bent at awkward angles. Tris thinks this is how it is now: people die and then the others move on (*D*, 55). This scene seems like something that soldiers would go through in a war. The next step is that the initiates are supposed to jump off a ledge into the unknown. One girl who used to belong to Erudite hesitates as she cannot believe they are asked to do something like this. She wants to know if there is water, but the instructors refuse to tell her. They say “If you can’t muster the will to jump off, you don’t belong here” (*D*, 57).

When the Dauntless transfers see the compound and their beds, they notice there are more beds than people. Eric, the leader of Dauntless, tells them that they thought more people would make it further. He tells them that at least one transfer dies every year. The initiates are ranked. The ranking determines the order in which they will select a job after the initiation ends and only ten best initiates will get to be Dauntless members, others will become factionless and as there are twenty initiates, half of them will become outcasts (*D*, 71-72). This puts a huge pressure on the new initiates. Molly, one of the initiates, thinks she might not have chosen Dauntless, if she had known this was the case. Eric replies to her: “If you are really one of us, it won’t matter to you that you might fail. And if it does, you are a coward” (*D*, 73). Not only are the methods extremely violent in Dauntless, but so is the speech.

The initiates are forced to fight one another (*D*, 100). Christina is injured and she gives up the fight. Eric is disappointed with her and he tells her to hang off a

chasm by one hand for five minutes. If she fails to do so, she is going to be kicked out of the Dauntless and she will become factionless: “If you can hang over the chasm for five minutes, I will forget your cowardice. If you can’t, I will not allow you to continue initiation” (*D*, 100).

Unlike *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent* does not show violence as entertainment, but it is still very much present, especially in Dauntless. The new initiates are practising throwing knives at a target. An initiate called Al throws a knife and it slips. Eric, the other instructor, tells him to go to pick up the knife while others are throwing and trying to hit a target (*D*, 159). When Al refuses, Eric tells others to stop throwing the knives and Al to stand in front of the target. Eric tells another instructor called Four to throw knives (*D*, 161-164). When Four questions Eric about his decision, Eric replies: “ ‘I have the authority here, remember?’ Eric says so quietly I can barely hear him. ‘Here and everywhere else’ ” (*D*, 161). Eric uses violence as a way to control the faction transfers and Four. He keeps the faction transfers in constant fear and shows them that he can decide what will happen to them.

The initiates also go through mental torture in the form of fear simulations. These simulations are supposed to make them braver, when they face their fears and eventually overcome them, but it turns out it is not this simple. Four sets the simulation for Tris and Tris thinks she is going to die in the simulation. After the simulation ends, she says: “What was the point of that, huh? I wasn’t aware that when I chose Dauntless I was signing up for torture!” (*D*, 237). Part of the initiation process are battles where the transfers are supposed to fight each other (*D*, 170). Other transfers have bullied Tris, because she comes from Abnegation and they call her Stiff. Tris fights against Molly who has been bullying her about her small size and her old faction. Tris loses control and Four has to eventually pull her away from kicking bleeding Molly who has fallen on the ground (*D*, 173-174). The next day Eric praises Tris for good behavior, since she was so violent towards Molly in their fight (*D*, 176).

Every year there is a Dauntless initiate who cannot take the pressure of this violent faction and commits suicide. This year it is Al, who has struggled with the initiation and commits suicide by jumping off a ledge (*D*, 302-304). The other Dauntless members do not seem very bothered by this as it seems normal to them: it happens every year with the new initiates.

5.3. Propaganda

Philip M. Taylor (2003: 5-6) states that propaganda means the communication of ideas that aim to make people think and behave in a desired way. According to him, propaganda is about persuading people to do things, which benefit those who are doing the persuading, and it is used by those who want to secure or retain power (Taylor 2003: 5-6). Propaganda is often associated with war and the reason is that propaganda is as significant a tool as swords guns and bombs in war. Propaganda should differ from education in that the imparting of information and ideas in education should prepare the student to make up his or her own mind on given topics.

The Handmaid's Tale mentions propaganda and how, for example, the news show only victories and never defeats, because "Who wants bad news?" (*HT*, 93). Aunt Lydia shows the handmaids videos and these videos contain pornography and women being brutally killed. Aunt Lydia's point in showing these videos is to show the handmaids how bad things used to be and how women were treated. Moira tells Offred later that the videos were fake (*HT*, 128).

Propaganda is presented in *The Hunger Games* when President Snow tells about the history of Panem and how now they need to have the Games so that they remember what the war was like. The real reason is to keep the people of Panem in constant fear and aware how the Capitol can take their children and do what they will with them (*HG*, 21). The way the tributes look is changed for the Games. The Capitol and other districts do not see how they actually look and how

malnourished some of them are. The Capitol will not see the reality and the horrible conditions where the tributes come from, because the tributes mainly talk about trivial matters in the interviews before entering the Games and therefore nobody will actually know anything real about them and the conditions they come from. The poor, including Katniss, are recreated into a form that is familiar to the rich and so she is adapted into a new kind of society and her social class is faded. Katniss' struggles, such as her saying goodbye and leaving her sister because she has to go to the Games, has become the sort of reality television drama we watch now. All the tributes are interviewed and televised in front of an audience. Caesar who is the interviewer asks Katniss to think about the moment when her little sister Prim's name was called in the reaping and Katniss volunteered to go instead (*HG*, 76-77, 145-150).

The faction called Erudite uses newspapers as a tool for propaganda in *Divergent* when they are trying to show Tris' home faction Abnegation in the worst possible light. They write about how Abnegation values and teaching should be questioned as Tris and Caleb, who are children of one of the council members, decided to become faction transfers when they left Abnegation: Tris transferred to Dauntless and Caleb to Erudite (*D*, 242). Molly, a Dauntless initiate who has been bullying Tris, has given an interview for a newspaper where she suggests that Tris has had a disturbed and abusive upbringing. The newspaper article questions Abnegation and claims it is corrupted and the members of the faction are tyrants (*D*, 243-244). Erudite are trying to show Abnegation in unfavourable light, in order to justify their plans and secure that their actions in the future will be seen as righteous.

5.4. Freedom of speech and language

Afshin Ellian and Gelijn Molier (2015: 125) state that free speech in the United States is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. According to Karla K. Gower (2002: 1), it is difficult to have a democracy that works without allowing its citizens the freedom of expression. As noted in a chapter 2.2., it is evident that the societies in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are not democracies. Gower (2002: 1) quotes Robert Bork when she says that representative democracy would not have a meaning if it did not have the freedom to discuss government and its policies. Gower also quotes Thomas Emerson (2002: 1) when she states that freedom of expression is a product of the development of the liberal constitutional state. Prior to the Enlightenment, the state's view of expression was authoritarian. Freedom of expression was seen as an instrument of and a threat to the state. The state had the power and command, and obedience and order were there most important values. Individuals were expected to obey the public law, which the state used to control expression and keep people in order.

Language and reading are used as means to control people in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Offred sees a store that only has a slogan and no text because even the names of shops are seen as temptations for the handmaids and thus places are now only known by their signs (*HT*, 35). The handmaids are the ones who do the grocery shopping and they go outside in pairs. The handmaids are of course able to read as reading and writing were taught in schools before Gilead was founded. When the handmaids are outside, they could for example read the shop signs. Reading can be seen as a special right some people have, since the aunts are allowed to read and the handmaids are not (*HT*, 139).

The speech of the handmaids is strictly monitored and controlled. The handmaids are not allowed to speak much to each other and so they have a special greeting: “‘Blessed be the fruit,’ she says to me, the accepted greeting among us. ‘May the Lord open’, I answer, the accepted response” (*HT*, 29). The handmaids are allowed to say these phrases to each other that do not hold any valid information.

People in the districts do not have freedom of speech in *The Hunger Games*. Katniss remembers her past and how she used to be afraid of her mother when she was younger (*HG*, 7). She was afraid she would reveal something about the people of the Capitol who rule Panem. She understood this would result in more trouble so she learned to be quiet and careful (*HG*, 7). When Katniss' little sister Prim is picked as a tribute to go to the Games, Katniss volunteers to go instead of her (*HG*, 27). The people of Panem who are in the crowd stand still and silent, which is boldest form of dissent people of District 12 can perform. This means they do not agree with the Games (*HG*, 27).

Tris and her brother Caleb chose different factions in the Choosing Ceremony in *Divergent*. Tris goes to visit her brother who chose Candor as his new faction. This is against the rules, but she does it anyway because she misses her family. Caleb tells her that the Candor leader Jeanie gives speeches everyday about how corrupt Abnegation, their home faction, is (*D*, 353). Caleb does not know what to believe anymore and Tris tries to tell him that he has to believe his family and their home faction as he used to live there and he knows what the faction is like. But he replies: "How much do I know? How much did they allow me to know? We weren't allowed to ask questions, Beatrice; we weren't allowed to know things!" (*D*, 353). There is no freedom of speech and freedom to pursue knowledge in Abnegation but, however, there is freedom to do both in Candor. Tris questions whether or not the information that is given in Candor is accurate and not manipulated to serve the needs of Candor leaders.

Tris is the only Abnegation transfer who goes to Dauntless in *Divergent*. Much of what she does is criticised by the others because of her faction. Other transfers from other factions do not seem to think very highly of Abnegation and they call Tris "Stiff", which is a slang word for Abnegation (*D*, 56). Eric, the Dauntless leader, thinks Tris is not going make it: " 'Ooh, a Stiff,' says Eric, smirking at me. 'We'll see how long you last' " (*D*, 67). Just like Katniss, Tris is an underdog. Nobody thinks she is going to make it through the initiation. Other faction transfers

do not seem to have any slang words for them and nobody else gets treated in the way Tris does.

5.5. Conclusions

Both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* mention environmental crisis as a part of the modern world coming to an end and the founding of dystopian countries such as Gilead and Panem. Both *Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* show us dystopias where totalitarian government is the main regime, which is the reason why it is possible to put the protagonists, Offred and Katniss, through such expectations as they have in the novels. *Divergent* does not have totalitarian regime and the reason for the dystopian society are human personality or humankind's inclination towards evil that caused the wars in the world.

Handmaid's Tale, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* show violent events to the public as a warning and a way to control the masses. In *The Handmaid's Tale* those who have not followed the rules in Gilead are hanged for the public to see. In *The Hunger Games* children kill each other and this is shown on television for Panem to watch. In *Divergent* the Dauntless initiates are forced to take a part in violent activities in order to become members of the society aka Dauntless, which is the faction they have chosen to join or they will become factionless who are outcasts.

The Handmaid's Tale is the only novel where religion, in this case extreme version of Christianity, is the chosen belief system and moral compass in the country. *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* do not mention religion.

Propaganda is used in all of the novels, in *The Handmaid's Tale* to show how the new regime is better than the old one and, for example, in the news, where they do not show any defeats but only victories. Propaganda is present in *The Hunger Games* when the Mayor of District 12 tells about Dark Days in the reaping ceremony. Dark Days refers to the uprising of the districts against the Capitol and during this uprising District Thirteen was destroyed. The Mayor tells the Games

were then created to remind people of the horrors and why these horrors should never happen again.

Freedom of speech is gone in *The Handmaid's Tale* as the handmaids are not allowed to read and their speech is monitored. They also use certain phrases almost as small talk. Haymitchs encourages Katniss to use more soft and feminine language to attract audience and sponsors (*HG*, 158).

6 CONCLUSIONS

According to Ferns (1999: 107), dystopian fiction shows us a society which is extrapolated from that which exists. Utopian fiction stresses the difference of the society it depicts. Dystopian fiction presents the nightmare future as a possible destination of the present, as if dystopia is a logical conclusion derived from the premises of the existing order and implies that it might become reality unless something is done to stop it. Utopian fiction rarely indicates how such an alternative might be created. This could mean that dystopian fiction can be seen as a warning sign.

What separates *The Handmaid's Tale* from *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* is that the two most recent novels are Young Adult fiction where the protagonist is an under-aged girl. *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are also full of action, whereas not that much happens in *The Handmaid's Tale*, because the novel consists of memories of how things used to be in Offred's life and how the world used to be compared to how it is currently. The novel consists of Offred's inner thoughts, whereas the two most recent novels show what is happening in the world right now for the protagonists. Offred has lived in the world as we know it and now she lives in a dystopia, whereas the dystopian world is all Katniss and Tris have ever experienced.

From early on, it becomes clear in *The Handmaid's Tale* and in *The Hunger Games* that the worlds where the protagonists live are dystopias, but this is not the case in *Divergent*. *Divergent* reveals the horrible truth piece by piece: a world that sounds almost like a utopia becomes a dystopia when Tris becomes an initiate. Dauntless is violent and torturous faction, where the initiates are forced to compete against each other in different ways. This resembles *The Hunger Games* in terms of competition: young people are supposed to compete against one another in violent situations.

Both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* start with something interesting and life-changing happening that day. Both of the stories start *in medias res*, in the middle of the narrative.

The Handmaid's Tale, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* show the reader very different societies, all of which are oppressive in one way or another. There is a ruling elite who has the power to make others suffer. *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* give more chances for their protagonists to become heroes and fight against the ruling elite, whereas this is impossible for Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the end, all three novels tell a story about an underdog who tries to survive in a society that does not value her life and does not care for the less fortunate.

For further studies, it would be interesting to study how dystopian regimes impact the mental state of the characters. Offred fights to stay sane and hold onto any piece of her former self she possibly can under Gilead's oppressing regime. Katniss' emotional disconnection raises a question about the condition of her mental state. Even before she has entered the Hunger Games, she has gone through trauma by losing her father and afterwards her mother completely shutting down and not showing any kind of care for her children. The situation has forced Katniss into being the head of the household while trying to process losing her parent. It is evident that the survivor of the Hunger Games will most probably suffer from trauma after the Games, as no form of psychological help is mentioned in the novel. Haymitch is a good example of what happens to the winner of the Games. He has won a house in the victor's village, but the Games have traumatised him so badly he has become an alcoholic. Tris sees people losing their mental stability in Dauntless in *Divergent* when Al, who has struggled with the initiation, commits suicide by jumping off a ledge (*D*, 302-304).

It would be very interesting to study religions' role in modern dystopian fiction. The whole social structure of Gilead is based on an extreme version of Christianity in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Nothing about religions is mentioned in *The*

Hunger Games and *Divergent* but as mentioned in a chapter 2.4., the importance and appreciation of factions in *Divergent* resemble religions or even cults.

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